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SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE	READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO. AD-B058839L / 3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
TITLE (and Subtitle) The Indian Ocean - An Area of Future Conflict	5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED 5 June 1981 Master's Thesis
	6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
AUTHOR(s) KAHLON, RAVI INDER SINGH, LTC, INDIA	8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS Student at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027	10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWG-DP	12. REPORT DATE 5 June 81
	13. NUMBER OF PAGES 57
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)	15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified
	15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE

AD B058839

LEVEL II

FILE COPY

16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report)

Distribution limited to U.S. Government agencies only; Proprietary Information; Other requests for this document must be referred to: HQ TRADOC, ATTN: ATCS-D, Fort Monroe, VA 23651

5 JUN 81

17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.

18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

Master of Military Art and Science

DTIC ELECTE AUG 11 1981 C

19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)

Indian Ocean
An Indian Perception

20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)

See reverse

DD FORM 1 JAN 73 1473 EDITION OF 1 NOV 65 IS OBSOLETE

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SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

THE INDIAN OCEAN
AN AREA OF FUTURE CONFLICT.

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

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1981

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The Indian Ocean - An Area of Future Conflict

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5 June 1981

A Master of Military Art and Science thesis presented to the faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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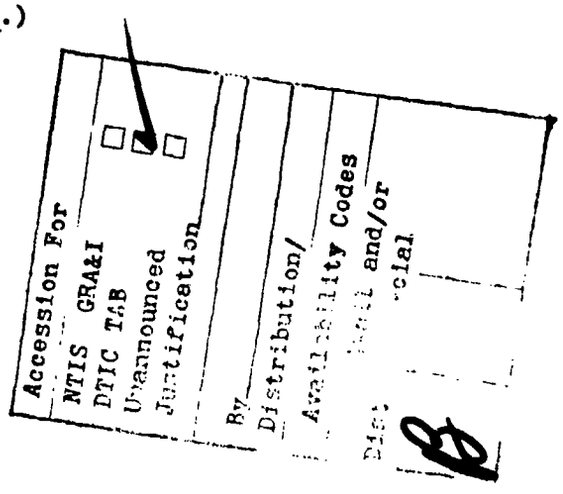
Accepted this 18th day of June 1981 by Philip J. Brookes, Director, Graduate Degree Programs.

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the view of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)



ABSTRACT

THE INDIAN OCEAN - AN AREA OF FUTURE CONFLICT by LTC Ravi Inder Singh Kahlon, Indian Army, 57 pages.

This study addresses the growing importance of the Indian Ocean Region to the littorals and non-littoral states including the super powers. After the departure of Great Britain from the area it remained neglected till early 70's when the oil embargo by the Arabs brought home the importance of a region which produces largest amount of oil.

The study reveals that the super powers are not only present in greater strength than every before but are working hard to create stable areas of influence. The littorals, led by India, are against super power presence and see a danger in super power rivalry.

Indian perceptions form a major portion of the study which concludes with a recommended role for India, as most Indians see it today.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Indian Ocean, with an area of 28.4 million square miles, is the third largest ocean in the world. The Ocean derives its name from India, which for a long time was considered the true centre of the Indian Ocean by most navigators.[1] The Ocean and the country after which it has been named, have more in common than just the name. Both have, in the past, been extremely important centres of human endeavour and activity. Both lost their importance over a time and remained unknown and neglected until recently. Now they are emerging again as areas worthy of interest and concern by the human race.

Auguste Toussaint, an eminent historian whose work on the Indian Ocean is an authoritative reference on the subject, called the Indian Ocean "a neglected ocean". This, however, probably reflects the period when the Ocean had lost its importance.

In the first century A.D., when the exploration of the Atlantic Ocean had just started, a seafarer's manual (the Periplus of Erythraean Sea) described the world of the Indian Ocean in great detail and accuracy.[2] The Indian Ocean was also the scene of two events which rank very high in the history of mankind. First, according to Toynbee, it was the arena in which the modern history of the world began, with Vasco de Garma's expedition to India. Second, on its periphery the contemporary history of all mankind began, with the opening of the Suez Canal.[3]

Having been a great and important trade route for centuries, with its littoral states being battlegrounds and objectives of colonial powers, the Indian Ocean became a British Lake, a status which lasted almost 150 years. Then came the breakdown of the colonial system in the decades following World War II. The British withdrew in the face of demands from many of the littoral states for their share of the world's resources, though none was capable of projecting its power onto the expanse of the Indian Ocean. Let us, now, take stock and see what it is that has made the Indian Ocean a region of interest to the world today.

The Indian Ocean washes the shores of three of the five continents of the world, wherein lie 36 countries ringing this vast expanse of water. With three-fourths of the world's total oil currently being produced in the ocean's rimland regions, the old search for, and trading in, tea and spices has given way to competition for oil and leadership in the Third World. The dependence of advanced industrial countries on "Black Gold" has sent them all looking for favourable terms of trade and secure sources of supply. This, then, has generated a desire to exercise influence in the area in order to secure their economic interests. The fact that only a few of the littoral states have a limited capacity[4] to exercise any measure of protective power or influence over the region has laid the area bare to intervention and exploitation by outside powers.

The British departure from the Indian Ocean coincided with the arrival of the Soviet Union.[5] From a western perspective, this development could not go unchallenged, and so the United States moved in to safeguard what she considered her national interests. For a few years, both super powers, being committed to the policy of detente, underplayed the importance of the region (at least overtly), while digging in and creating areas of influence. But, of late, with the developments in the

Horn of Africa and Afghanistan, both sides are openly jockeying for positions of strategic influence.

A very striking characteristic of the Indian Ocean politics is the disparity between interests and capabilities of littoral and non littoral states. A few of the littoral states are just not interested, while most of them are interested but have no capability to influence events. Additionally, most of the littoral states are poor, underdeveloped and politically unstable. Non-littoral states, such as Japan, Great Britain and France, have very profound interests, but limited capabilities of projecting their power in the region. The two super powers have both vital interests and the capabilities to project their influence and power.

Because of the relative weakness of her navy, China has not been able to establish a naval presence in the Indian Ocean in modern times. Chinese fleets did, however, sail through the Indian Ocean right up to East Africa in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and may well do so in the near future. Today, China has very close and cordial relationships in the region, particularly with Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Tarzania. Over the years, she has been trying assiduously to cultivate influence among these nations by using military and economic aid as a tool. China has embarked upon a modernisation programme for her armed forces, and the Chinese navy, too, will benefit and enhance its capability to operate at great distances from the mainland. Chinese military delegations have been visiting various countries, including Great Britain, France, Sweden, West Germany, Italy and Yugoslavia, to negotiate arms deals. Some of the nations mentioned above, could conceivably offer logistic shore support to Chinese naval vessels. Should they do so, it would facilitate Chinese operations in the Indian Ocean.

Thus we see that the Indian Ocean is a region which is important not only to the littoral states but also to many non-littoral states such as Japan, Great Britain and France. The two super powers, too, have an obvious interest. The ever-increasing need for oil and the nearly complete dependency of industrially advanced nations on oil will further enhance the importance of this region. With most littoral states riven with poverty, strife and political unstability and, so, open to outside intervention, with the super powers attaching great importance to the region and with China becoming more interested, the stage is set to make the Indian Ocean an "Area of Conflict" in the near future.

Objective of the Paper

The primary purposes of the paper are:

1. To examine the interests and objectives of the super powers along with some non-littoral and littoral states and then:

2. To present Indian perceptions.

As a secondary objective, the paper is intended to provide a better understanding of the Indian viewpoint concerning the Indian Ocean region.

Definitions

A few definitions follow to explain the meaning of certain terms:

Access. Allowing use of an existing facility such as an airfield or a naval base to military aircraft or ships of another nation for non combat tasks. No permanent arrangements between the provider and the user exist and the assistance rendered by the provider is requested by the user as and when required except in an emergency when assistance is provided on humanitarian grounds.

Facility. Provision of assistance, such as refuelling and repair, on a regular basis, as a part of a formal agreement mostly for non combat tasks. The form and substance of assistance is provided entirely by the host-nation. When specially cleared in advance, such an assistance could be for combat tasks too.

Base. As a result of a formal open or secret agreement, this involves provision of real estate and granting of the right to a friendly nation to establish and operate a military establishment, from which aircraft, ships or soldiers of that nation can operate against a third nation, both in peace and war, with full freedom of action.

Organisation

This paper is organised as follows: Chapter I covers the introduction; Chapter II will cover the interests, objectives, involvement and influence of the United States of America and the Soviet Union. Chapter III will focus on interests and viewpoints of some of the non littoral and littoral states, with emphasis on the Indian viewpoint, and Chapter IV will include conclusions based on an analysis of various perspectives and recommendations for a possible role for India.

END NOTES

[1]Auguste Toussaint, History of Indian Ocean, trans., June Guicharnaud (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 10.

[2]Ibid., p. 2.

[3]Ibid.

[4]R.M. Burrell and Alvin T. Cotterell, eds., The Indian Ocean: Its Political, Economic and Military Importance (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), p. xvii.

[5]W.A.C. Adie, Oil, Politics and Seapower: The Indian Ocean Vortex (New York: Crane, Russak and Company, Inc., 1975), p. 41.

CHAPTER II

SUPER-POWERS: INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES

> Two super powers have beefed up military strength in the Indian Ocean...The scramble for this area between the United States and the Soviet Union will become even fiercer in the days to come.
>
> Peking Review, January 14, 1972

General

The world today is highly interdependent, complex and fast-changing, and yet it cannot be denied that its destiny is almost totally controlled by the super powers.

The United States, due to her great industrial and agricultural production and overall economic potential, as well as a very mature and responsible role in World War II, rose to number one position in wealth and power and was drawn by the circumstances to assume the role and responsibility of world leadership. From thereon, its national interests and demands of statehood have often forced her to sacrifice the noble principles of democratic freedom and fairness in her dealings abroad. Over a period of time, a number of complex factors both abroad and at home have resulted in the erosion of the influence that the United States once enjoyed around the world. Today, however, as per the policy declarations by the newly elected President of the United States, Mr. Ronald Reagan, the United States is determined to reassert her position, by use of force if necessary, to maintain her position in the world[1] and to protect her national interests.

The other super power, the Soviet Union, is a product of a very tragic past, including unprecedent loss of life and material that nearly destroyed her during World War II. It did, however, emerge as a militarily powerful and economically strong nation, having a well defined and attractive ideology. This ideology de-emphasises individual freedom but promises equal distribution of resources, which is a very welcome idea to the worlds many underdeveloped and impoverished nations. The Soviet Union not only believes in this ideology, but also wants to spread it all over the world.[2]

The recent actions of the super powers, like the Soviet move in Afghanistan and their alleged involvement in El Salvador, and an increase in the U.S. defence expenditure as well as its recent policy pronouncements, indicate that they are on a collision course. The policy of "detente", which appeared to be successful for a while, has lately been undermined by actions of both super powers. A narrative of the United States and the Soviet Union's interests and actions in the Indian Ocean region follows.

U.S. Interests and Objectives

No other major ocean is as far away from United States shores as the Indian Ocean. The two lie nearby exactly on the opposite sides of the globe; for example, Sri Lanka's magnificent harbour at Trincomalee is roughly 11,500 miles from both New York and San Francisco.[3]

For the United States, one may conclude that there is no area in the world which is not of interest. Yet it is a fact that the immediate needs of time dictate which areas become more prominent, while others remain of little or no interest. The British presence in the Indian Ocean prior to 1968 had permitted the United States to adopt an attitude of indifference about the region, since it did not see any of her interests

jeopardised or threatened. The British withdrawal from the region and the Soviet entry did raise some eyebrows, but compared to the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, or even the Mediterranean Sea, this region remained a low priority. If we were to define United States interests on a scale from 0-10, the Indian Ocean would lie at 2-3, as against 7-8 for the Mediterranean Sea and 8-9 for the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.[4] Retired Rear Admiral Gene La Rocque expressed a view of American interests in the Indian Ocean in early 1974. In support of his statements he quoted many officials of the United States State Department. He wrote:[5]

> Until very recently, U.S. policy towards the Indian Ocean was, with some exceptions such as the dangerous "tilting" exercise in gun boat diplomacy during the Indian-Pakistan War of 1971, sound and reasonable, one of restraint and constrained military presence. This was in recognition of the fact that the U.S. had no vital interests at stake in the region and that U.S. security interests there are comparatively limited.

Interestingly enough, most of the statements by the State Department officials, cited by Admiral La Rocque in support of his contention, were made prior to the oil embargo of 1973 imposed by the Arabs against nations sympathetic to the cause of Israel. This period (1973-4), then, was the turning point with respect to the priority of U.S. interests in the Indian Ocean region in relation to U.S. interests in other regions. Since that time, the importance of the area has grown in the eyes of U.S. policy makers. Today, with the Soviets fully entrenched in Afghanistan, the United States cannot afford to neglect this area any more, without hurting her national interests and those of her allies.

The Indian Ocean area is a vast region containing several sub-regions, each having different political and cultural characteristics. Economic diversity, which is also present, is however, a recent phenomenon. Major subdivisions of the Indian Ocean area are: (1) East Africa and the ocean region east of it; (2) the northwest from Somalia around to Iran,

including the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Persian Gulf; (3) the Indian subcontinent and the sea southwards; and (4) Southeast Asia and Australia.[6] These regions have a great diversity in economic, political and cultural areas. It should, therefore, be evident that U.S. interests and objectives may well be different in each subregion, as in fact they are. The United State's interests in the Middle East are markedly different from those in the Indian subcontinent.

Free and assured access to petroleum products in the region, both for the United States and her allies (more specifically Western Europe and Japan), is perhaps the most important interest the United States has in the region. In the recent past, the proportion of the Middle East oil imports to all oil consumed in a given country or region has run as high as 72 percent for Japan, 60 percent for Western Europe and 16 percent for the United States. The United States can reduce this dependence by conserving energy and even increasing her own production. This, however, may encourage the OPEC countries to cut down on their production, and such an action could hurt Japan and West European countries. The importance of the Middle East oil imports to the United States can be judged from the fact that a 5 percent drop in the world supply of oil at the time of Iranian revolution had affected U.S. style of living by raising gasoline prices. More recently, the war between Iran and Iraq, and the Iranian threat to close the Straits of Hormuz, have prompted the United States to position in that region the largest naval force she has ever deployed in the Indian Ocean, and to declare that she will not accept the closure of the straits. In addition, because oil is so very important for the United States and her allies, and since Saudi Arabia is the most friendly to the United States of all Gulf oil producers, Saudi Arabia's security may well be considered a major U.S. security objective in the area. This was exhibited

by the recent provision of four Airborne Warning and Combat System (AWACS) aircraft by the United States to provide early warning for any threat arising to the Saudi oil fields and perhaps to "show the flag."

The United States also has a stake in the stability and economic development of the countries of the region. Any conflict amongst local powers and general instability in the region is likely to benefit the Soviet Union or China. Washington thus prefers the status quo, or a change which will favour the United States or her allies.

The United States is also interested in and committed to the maintenance of freedom of the seas, including international straits. In this respect, the unique shape of the Indian Ocean, with its funnel shaped entry areas and choke points, merits special consideration.[7] (For details of Sea Lines of Communications (SLOC) and important choke points, see the map attached at the end of this chapter at page 24.) Generally speaking, the Cape of Good Hope, the Mozambique Channel, the Straits of Bab-El-Mandeb, the Straits of Hormuz and the Straits of Malacca, are the choke points controlling SLOC through the Indian Ocean. These choke points then become areas of greater focus and attention. The passage through the Indian Ocean is, however, not as vital to the United States as it is to her allies, Japan, Western Europe and Australia.[8]

The Indian Ocean is also important to the United States as a part of her submarine strategy.[9] She can pose a strategic threat to the Soviet Union and her allies by ballistic missile-equipped submarines operating in the Indian Ocean. There is no evidence to this day that the United States has deployed ballistic missile-equipped submarines in the Indian Ocean. Yet the physical possibility of the act cannot be denied. However, once long range Trident SLBMs and submarines are introduced and are capable of carrying out their deterrent mission from positions off the U.S. coast,

the United States will have no need to deploy strategic missile forces in the Indian Ocean.

As a super power, the United States may need to project her military power into any part of the world to meet a contingency. In the past, American equipment was flown to India to assist her against Chinese incursions, and the U.S. Seventh Fleet steamed into the Bay of Bengal in 1971 to put pressure on India in the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971. At present, it is likely that a Soviet advance into Pakistan or a flare up in the Middle East will draw the United States into that area. The Indian Ocean is important to the United States as a vital link in her global network. Additionally, the Indian Ocean is a unique location for the American deterrent force, since many parts of the Soviet Union and China can be targeted from the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal.

With the fall of the Shah of Iran, a pro-American and strategically located emerging military power has collapsed. The Shah was effectively protecting U.S. security interests in the Persian Gulf and providing important intelligence facilities.[10] With the fall of the Shah, not only has the United States lost all that, but it faces a very hostile government in Iran. The capture and ill treatment of American diplomats have created further complications. Even though the Iranians have released all American hostages, the episode has scarred the U.S.-Irani relations rather badly. Even so, Iran remains strategically important to the United States and she can ill afford to let Iran drift into the Soviet camp. Iran's oil and substantial economic possibilities make it even more important for the United States. A friendly Iran will continue to be a U.S. objective in the region. This is a good example where demands of statehood will supercede national sentiment.

After the British withdrawal from east of Suez, the United States, as the leading western power, could not afford to let a power vacuume be filled by her rival. To this end, then, containment of Soviet influence in this region was and remains today a major U.S. interest and objective.

Finally, the region is extremely important for the United States and her industrially advanced allies both as a potential market for their products and as a source of supply for raw materials. As per an expert, twenty of the forty important raw materials needed by the West are imported from the Indian Ocean region.[11] The United States, too, is an importer of raw materials. She is self sufficient in only ten of the top thirty-six important raw materials.

U.S. Involvement and Influence

The Arab oil embargo of 1973 brought into focus the importance of the region and the Indian Ocean to the well being of the United States. However, other than recognising the importance of the Indian Ocean region, nothing tangible was done other than upgrading the importance of Diego Garcia. The total shipdays for U.S. ships increased marginally, while the Soviets had a figure four times as high.[12] Even in terms of port calls, the Soviets in 1973, totalled 153 as against 115 by the U.S. ships.[13] Largely overlooked were the facts that the Indian Ocean region is at a great distance and that any future need to project power therein would require a very reliable support infrastructure. Fears of Soviet expansion after the invasion of Afghanistan, and the revolutionary wildfires after the fall of the Shah of Iran, have sent the United States scrambling to acquire bases and facilities all over the region. The growth of policies and feelings of non-alignment rooted in nationalism and anti-colonialism amongst the littoral states, whereby most of them do not feel inclined

to grant bases to a foreign power coupled with their uncertainty about the fidelity, loyalty and the staying power of the United States are showing up as penalties of three decades of "strategic neglect".

In the post war period, the United States made her military and strategic infrastructure investments in the North Atlantic and Pacific basin areas, leaving bare the vast area in-between. Until the late sixties, this neglect was excused on the grounds that the British presence obviated a U.S. presence. In 1977, the Carter Administration initiated negotiations with the Soviets to demilitarise this region. However, Soviet moves into the Horn of Africa soon negated any such efforts. Today, the United States finds itself facing a whole range of contingencies suggesting a possible application of military power on one hand, and on the other hand, lacking the infrastructure for projecting such power. In an effort to bridge the gap, the United States is carrying out an all-out effort to provide her with the means to sustain a possible military role in the area. These efforts include a much larger than ever deployment of U.S. naval ships and Marines in the area, long range plans for creating a "Rapid Deployment Force" and a serious search for "bases" and "facilities" to support a credible military deployment. While the United States has deployed the largest number of ships and Marines ever in the area, she is having trouble acquiring bases since no sovereign nation accepts easily the military presence of another nation on her soil. Nevertheless, the United States has made some serious overtures and gained certain bases and facilities for her use.

Diego Garcia is indeed the most reliable U.S. base in the Indian Ocean, since it is British owned and a treaty between the United States and Great Britain exists covering the use of Diego Garcia. Mauritius is currently demanding the return of the island from the British but this demand is not likely to be met. The fact that Diego Garcia along with some

neighbouring islands forms the British Indian Ocean Territory is a reality. A programme for improvement, including construction of a 12,000 foot runway and the deepening of the lagoon to accommodate a carrier task force, has already been accepted. The programme will cost $170 million over four years beginning fiscal year 1981.[14] The island is, however, over 2,000 miles from the Persian Gulf and, while being an excellent base for supporting deployment, cannot substitute for a base or facility within easy turnaround of the most sensitive area in the region. It is, though, ideally located to protect sea routes going eastwards and westwards.

Kenya has been approached by the United States and she has agreed to provide access to wider use of her port at Mombasa and the airport close-by. The gain of these access rights compensates for the loss of Diego Suarez on the northern edge of Madagascar and Maputo in Mozambique. However, Kenya, too, is some 2,500 miles away from the Straits of Hormuz and does not fulfill all the U.S. needs.

The United States recently reached an accord on the use of the former Soviet naval base at Berbera. In addition to the naval installation, there is a 14,700 foot long runway capable of accommodating all types of aircraft. Berbera is 1,000 miles closer to the Straits of Hormuz than Diego Garcia and has the added advantage of reassuring the Saudi's, who are not very comfortable with the Soviet presence in Ethiopia. A problem with the accord is that transfer of large quantities of arms to Somalia in exchange for use of facilities at Berbera will alarm the Soviets since they are helping Ethiopia in the Ethiopia-Somalia fight over Ogaden.

In relation to the Straits of Hormuz, the best facilities available to the United States, so far, are in Oman. The United States already enjoys access to the Omani airfield at Masirah which, being an old British base, has excellent facilities and is most conveniently located. Oman, with a

prowestern Sultan, provides the United States with many additional advantages due to her proximity to the Straits of Hormuz, and the United States is seeking greater use of Omani ports at Muscat and Salalah.

Another possible facility that may be available to the United States is the port of Gwadar in the Southwestern part of Baluchistan province in Pakistan. In fact, in 1973-74, the port was offered to the United States by the late Mr. Bhutto, then Prime Minister of Pakistan. Gwadar is only 200-250 miles from sea lanes leading into the Straits of Hormuz and holds out many advantages due to this proximity. Additionally, the Pakistani airbase at Peshawar where the U2 flights originated in the late 1950's and early 1960's, as well as the Karachi seaport facilities, may also be made available to the United States. Considering that the Soviets are well entrenched in Afghanistan, the United States would naturally prefer to use these. The questions are: What price would Pakistan set for the deal? Would the United States want to pay it?

In the Southeastern quadrant of the Indian Ocean Australia provides the United States with excellent facilities and will likely continue to do so. Australia depends on the United States for her ultimate defence under the Anzus treaty. Australia views the Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean as a potential threat to her maritime routes and long, sparsely populated Indian Ocean coast line. In that context, the naval facilities she offers the United States at Cockburn Sound in Western Australia are likely to assume even greater importance in both the Australian and the American scheme of things.

Soviet Interests and Objectives

The Soviet navy's move into the Indian Ocean in March 1968 was preceded by numerous gestures and much diplomatic activity, giving rise

to a belief that it was part of a grand design - the fulfillment of a long sought after objective: to have access to warn water ports. Russian interest in India dates back to 1801, when Tsar Paul planned to seize India and eliminate British influence there.[15] Some of the more important Russian diplomatic moves were: Soviet support of India in Sino-Indian War of 1962; the Soviet memorandum of December 1964 proposing a nuclear free zone in the Indian Ocean; Soviet mediation between India and Pakistan in 1965 at Tashkent and the Soviet proposal in 1969 for the establishment of an Asian Collective Security Act.

The question of Soviet aims and interests in and around the area has been constantly debated since 1968. Some of the more accepted objectives of the Soviets are discussed below:

In Soviet circles, a lot of prominence has been given to the Soviet Strategic concern to detect and oppose the nuclear strike forces of the United States in the waters of the Indian Ocean. The United States has never admitted such a deployment, but the fact is that the physical possibility does exist for the targets in Soviet Central Asia and the Urals of being hit by submarines equipped with Palaris or Poseidon missiles.

The fact that the Indian Ocean is the only assured route that Soviet European fleets can use to maintain communications with the Pacific fleets makes these waters extremely important to the Soviets.[16] This really is a geographic necessity and the Russo-Japanese War provides a historic example of this.

Another possible reason for the Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean can be the protection of her oceanic research vessels and the merchant and fishing fleets. These indeed have been growing at a spectacular rate.

One possible reason could be that the Soviet Union is asserting itself as a super power and wishes to achieve parity with the United States. To show the flag has, since very old times, been considered a useful device to increase influence and prestige.

Of the many possible reasons for the Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean, containment of China could certainly be considered most plausible. The Soviet naval presence reassures those countries which do not get along well with China and serves as a reminder of Soviet strength to those who side with her. The fact that China has no navy worth the name gives the Soviets a chance to score over her. Additionally, the Soviet presence also reassures the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen against Saudi Arabia, and Ethiopia against Somalia.

In the event of a Sino-Soviet War, the Trans-Siberian railroad, which is the major communications link between Soviet Europe and her Far Eastern maritime region, could be cut. The Soviets might, then, have to rely upon cargo shipped between the Soviet Union's European and Pacific ports through the Indian Ocean. Even though the Chinese navy is not strong enough to threaten the Soviet sea lanes it could, with the help of friendly countries located along the choke points, disrupt Soviet shipping. It is not unreasonable to expect, then, that Sino-Soviet competition will be intense around these choke points.

Regardless of any other factor, the fact is that the Northern tier of countries served by the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea border on the Soviet Union and thus are of importance to her. In fact some unique security problems are likely to crop up for the Soviets, based on the fact that many Iranian and Iraqi people have close ethnic and religious ties with their Muslim brethern living across the border in the Soviet Union. The Soviets fear that the Pan-Islamic movements could have a

destabilising effect on her control over her Muslim population. The fact that every fifth Soviet citizen is a Muslim, and that the Muslim population will continue to grow in relation to the non-Muslim people in the USSR, makes this threat for the Soviets very real and potent.

Based on the aforesaid, Soviet goals in the Indian Ocean can be deduced. One report describes these goals as follows:

1. Enhance the Soviet image as a world power.
2. Expand Soviet influence in the region.
3. Block Western and Chinese influence.
4. Influence external states whose economy depends on Indian Ocean sea lanes.
5. Threaten the Western access to oil in the Gulf region.[17]

Soviet Involvement and Influence

The Soviet Union has openly supported all liberation movements in Africa and in fact has managed to convince most involved African nations that Western governments condoned the white regimes in Africa. The Soviets supplied arms for liberation in Mozambique and, in June 1975, Mozambique became independent. Mozambique has excellent natural harbours and takes an additional strategic importance due to the withdrawal of the French from Diego Suarez. The Mozambican government receives aid from the Soviet Union and as such it can be assumed that the Soviets have access to Mozambican ports for their naval and fishing vessels. Such facilities greatly strengthen the Soviet Strategy in the Southwestern section of the Indian Ocean where so far they had very limited possibilities for such facilities.[18] The Soviet Union also has cordial relationships with Mauritius. Some analysts believe that the Soviet Union is urging Mauritius to reclaim Diego Garcia from Great Britain. The Soviet failure to hold

onto Berbera in Somalia, a base that they had developed at great cost, is indeed a major setback for them. This loss, however, has been compensated by the facilities that they now enjoy at Assab in Ethiopia.

The Soviets consider the Middle East extremely important. They have been trying to be the dominant external power in the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf area. They have excellent relations with the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen which welcomes the Soviet fleet. The Soviets have unrestricted use of facilities at Aden and Hodieda.[19] Facilities at Aden have been extended. The South Yeminis have made the island of Socotra available to the Soviets who are developing it into a first class base.[20]

The Soviet Union has had good relations with Iraq with whom they have signed a 15 year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation.[21] The Soviets are the main arms suppliers of the Iraqis and currently have access to Iraqi port of Umm Qasr. With the American-Irani relations being extremely strained after the fall of the Shah of Iran and the "hostage" issue, the Soviets have a good change to improve their relations w th Iran. The fact that the Soviets are not supporting Iraq in the Iran-Iraq war supports this contention.

On the Indian Subcontinent, the Soviets did make serious efforts and in the early sixties had a good relationship with Pakistan. They mediated between India and Pakistan after the 1965 Indo-Pak War and even supplied military hardware to Pakistan after this war. However, the situation changed in 1971 when the Soviets supported India. Now, having moved into Afghanistan, the Soviets are viewed by the Pakistanis with utter suspicion and it is unlikely that they would offer any assistance to the Soviets.

So far as India is concerned, the Soviets have been major suppliers of arms and in 1971 signed a 20 year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation.

India does not offer any bases or facilities to the Soviet Union or to the United States. Both the super powers, however, enjoy access to Indian ports for commercial and emergency purposes only.

Further to the East of the Indian Subcontinent, the Soviets enjoy the excellent facilities available at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam and can depend upon their availability.

It can thus be seen that, within 12 years of her arrival in the region, the Soviet Union has been able to create for her use, facilities where none existed before. She has no base in the region but enjoys the use of several facilities.

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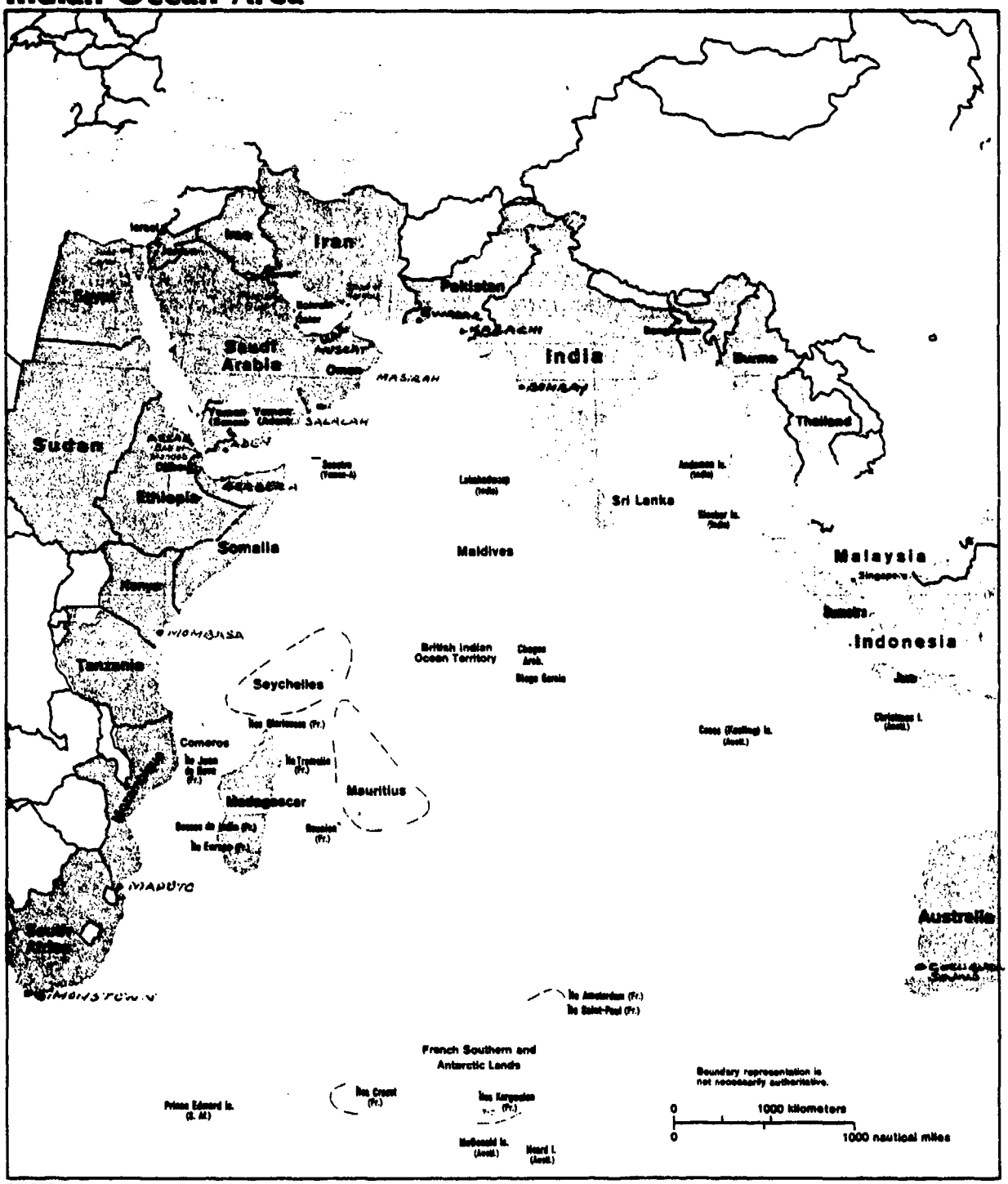
Indian Ocean Area



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CHAPTER III

INTERESTS OF IMPORTANT NON-LITTORAL AND LITTORAL STATES

NON-LITTORAL STATES

Great Britain

The Indian Ocean was once considered a "British Lake" and for over 150 years the British had total control over this ocean. Having granted freedom to most of her colonies and suffering from a sinking economy, the British withdrew from East of Suez in 1971. With this move Great Britain gave up her claim to naval supremacy in the Indian Ocean.[1] Nevertheless Great Britain did not lose total interest and maintained naval forces at Cape Town and Singapore. The Simonstown Agreement of 1955 between Great Britain and South Africa envisioned that joint naval security measures would be conducted by the two countries and Simonstown became a regular port of call for the Royal Navy. In 1975, Great Britain formally withdrew from the agreement due to diplomatic pressures. It is envisaged, however, that in times of emergency the port will be available to Great Britain and her allies.[2]

Concerned by the decline of their authority, East of Suez, the British created The British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) in 1965. The United Kingdom arranged for the transfer of four of the least inhabitated island groups from two of the crown colonies. Mauritius gave away the Chagos Archipelago while the Aldabra, Desroches and Farquhar groups were acquired from the Seychelles. However, upon its independence in 1976,

the three groups of islands acquired from the Seychelles were returned and currently the BIOT constitutes the Chagos Archipelago only.[3] The BIOT, constitutes, on the part of the British, a strategic move to enable her and the United States to establish a reliable base in the middle of the Indian Ocean.[4] The British gave up their refuelling and staging base at Gan in Maldives in March 1976 and Mahe in Seychelles in 1975 but still operate an airfield at Masirah Island in Oman. Additionally, they continue to use the U.S. base in Chagos Archipelago.

The British interests in the region can be summarised as follows:

1. She depends on West Asian oil producing countries for supply of crude which, if stopped, could hurt her fragile economy.

2. She has to protect her sea trade, which has traditionally been with nations of this region, primarily due to her past status of a colonial master. Approximately 22 percent of her overseas transactions are carried out with countries of the Indian Ocean region.[5]

3. Her political interest in the region is highlighted by active cooperation with the United States in the construction of the Diego Garcia base.

4. She has not, as yet, totally abandoned her Far Eastern out post of Hong Kong and her commitments in Southeast Asia. Hence, Great Britain still has a requirement to maintain secure lines of communication through the Indian Ocean.

France

For almost 100 years, France has been seriously interested in the western stretch of the Indian Ocean, especially the Horn of Africa and the Islands along the East African coast. In the past 30 years, the French have lost control over most of the territories in this region.

This has, however, not diminished French interest in the area. France still retains a major naval base in the Reunion Island, besides maintaining naval stations in the far flung isles of Amasterdam, Crozet and Kerguelen in the Southern part of the Indian Ocean.[6] She has an excellent base at Djibouti which has an excellent harbour. The loss of Diego Suarez in June 1973 was a serious blow to the viability of the French military presence in the region. She, however, showed up the determination to continue to have a viable presence in the area by establishing a new naval command, responsible for the Indian Ocean. She has a sizeable presence in Djibouti and the Reunion Island and enjoys assured communications with her Indian Ocean outposts by having staging posts in her erstwhile colonies in West and Central Africa. As against the British, who depend on the United States to maintain a credible presence in the region, the French have done it alone. Therefore, the major French interests in the Indian Ocean can be summed up as follows:

1. French Policy towards the Indian Ocean region does not materially differ from her foreign policy elsewhere in the world. She has always aspired to be a world power, and her presence in the region is an extension of this policy.

2. France is dependent for oil and raw materials on the region, and her sea lanes leading to and from the Suez Canal and the Cape of Good Hope are protected by her Indian Ocean possessions. This happy position, France wants to continue.

Japan

Japan is an island state and Asia's greatest, yet least self sufficient, country. Hence she is compelled to be a maritime state. Seaborne trade is as important to her today as it was to Great Britain in

the nineteenth century. Japan lacks raw materials and fuel and has to search for and procure them from overseas. Over 90 percent of her crude oil imports come from Southwest Asia through the Indian Ocean and she has substantial investments in the oil industry of Middle East countries.[7]

The magnitude of Japanese foreign trade and its importance for Japan's economic prosperity have led to a debate on the future role of Japan. A growing lobby of Japanese businessmen have been pleading for an effective Japanese naval role in the Indian Ocean.[8]

Japan has the second largest merchant fleet in the world and is vitally interested to have the freedom to navigate throughout the Indian Ocean in general, and the Strait of Malacca in particular. Any restriction on traffic through this Strait will cause Japan a very serious loss. To obviate such a problem, she has secured Thailand's approval for construction of a major oil pipeline across the Isthmus of Kra on the condition that once completed, it will be under Thai control.

The major Japanese interests in the Indian Ocean region are enumerated below:

1. She imports 99.6 percent of her crude oil requirements, of which 85 percent comes from the Persian Gulf countries. It is natural that it be shipped through the shortest route, and that is the Indian Ocean and Malacca Straits.[9]

2. Japan heavily depends upon imports of raw materials, especially iron ore and coal, from this region. She imports iron ore from India and Western Australia and coal from Australia. All these imports must pass through the Indian Ocean.[10]

3. Japan thrives on her exports and her industrial economy is totally dependent on her ability to export. A great proportion of her exports have to pass through the Indian Ocean.

4. The oil rich countries are very keen to spend their petro-dollars on buying technology and long term investments. Japan, as a highly developed nation, is aware that the Middle East countries provide a very lucrative export market and would not like to lose out on this.

China

China has regarded the Soviet Union as the main threat to her security since the 1960's.[11] Communist China's military posture also takes note of the fact that the Soviet Union has effectively encircled her by land, and is in the process of doing so by sea. The Chinese fear a Soviet move to encircle China completely, possibly with the help of India and Japan. Such an encirclement can only come about with a strong Soviet Naval presence in the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, the increased presence of Soviet vessels[12] in the Indian Ocean and the formal Soviet-Indian Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance of 1971 are both regarded by China as efforts to dominate the Indian Ocean.

In a strategic sense, this body of water is important to China for her growing influence in Tanzania and other East African littorals.[13] China is also acutely aware of the importance of the Strait of Malacca as she perceives that the main thrust of Soviet naval encirclement from the Indian Ocean will be through this Strait into the South China Sea. If the Chinese Navy is to play a role in stemming this encirclement, the most important place will be the Eastern approaches to the Strait of Malacca.[14] China is at present, incapable of countering any Soviet move in this region, and in order to influence these waters, is striving hard to maintain a lasting presence in South East Asia, where she is in direct confrontation with the Soviet Union.

To sum up, as China grows into a major sea power, her main interests in the region will be to keep the Strait of Malacca open and safe for uninterrupted shipping. For the present, however, Chinese diplomacy will continue to try to block Soviet influence in the Indian Ocean.

LITTORAL STATES

South Africa

South Africa's location is strategically important since it is astride the Southwestern approaches to the Indian Ocean and the Cape of Good Hope route. During the time when the Suez Canal was closed, 25,000 ships were sailing around the Cape of Good Hope every year. Reopening the Suez Canal has affected the sea traffic passing around the Cape only marginally.[15] Super tankers of 200,000 ton displacement continue to use this route, and the fact that most of the shipping from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic, as well as from the Persian Gulf to Europe or North America, uses this route bestow great geopolitical importance on South Africa.[16]

The Cape Sea Route, therefore, is most important to South Africa. Any threat to this route will have serious repercussions upon the maritime security of that country. The Simonstown Agreement, entered into by Great Britain and the Republic of South Africa in 1955, truly recognised the importance of sea communications. However, South Africa's determination to continue to practice the policy of "apartheid", and growing opposition from the nations of the world in general, and the African nations in particular, forced Great Britain to pull out of the Agreement in 1975, since continued relations with the Republic of South Africa were beginning to hurt her national interests.

South Africa maintains no diplomatic relations with the countries of Africa, except Malawi. Other than with West European countries and the United States, she enjoys diplomatic relations with only a few of the Asian and South American countries. Because of diplomatic isolation, and a belief that no other western nation will support her in a crisis, the Republic of South Africa started building up a powerful military machine in early 1960's.[17] The arms embargo passed by the United Nations against South Africa was hardly successful, and her armed forces grew into strong, well equipped and well trained organisations. Her navy, which is well configured, is however, the weakest arm of her defence forces. South Africa has a powerful Air Force and a strong Army trained to fight external threat and internal infiltration. The Organisation of African Unity has long been advocating a "military solution" using the armies of African nations, perhaps aided by one of the two big communist powers, Soviet Union or China. This threat has forced the Republic of South Africa to have a strong military establishment capable of meeting any such attempt. With her military and economic strength, South Africa seems to be capable of maintaining white supremacy internally and upholding her weight in the regional power balance.

South Africa views the Indian Ocean region in the light of a conflict between pro and anti-communist forces. She views the Soviet naval presence as serving the purposes of subversion and establishment of Soviet influence in the area. The part played by the Soviet equipped Cubans in Angola confirms this view. The Republic of South Africa, though willing to go it alone, would welcome cooperation with Western nations, and her strategic position in the region places her in a position which will be difficult for the western nations to ignore in case the Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean area increases. The Western

nations may then throw their prejudices against South Africa's policy to the wind and assist her in opposing a common enemy. The Republic of South Africa, surely, hopes that events will take this course.

Australia

> No other country of the Western tradition is more vulnerable than Australia to any international storms that may arise in the Indian Ocean, and none has a clearer or more direct interest in the construction, if possible, of a viable system covering that very extensive portion of the globe.
>
> Carol Bell[18]

Australia is a two-ocean continent and has 5,000 miles of coast line on the Indian Ocean west and south from Darwin. The special relationship that Australia enjoyed with Great Britain, and the fact that the British dominated the Indian Ocean for over 150 years, made the Australians oblivious to any problems therein and West Australia's development was totally neglected by the government in Canberra. The belated consciousness of vulnerability has brought the importance of Western Australia into greater focus.[19]

The British withdrawal from the Indian Ocean increased Australian awareness of the fact that her security problems involved two oceanic sides and that western oriented elements of naval power may not be present in the Indian Ocean for long. With the passage of time, it became clear that Australia would have to contend with two types of potential presences in the Indian Ocean: that of the littorals and the two super powers.

So far as the littoral states are concerned, Australia is in an advantageous position. Even though Australian political opinion may be resistant to any defence arrangements with South Africa, due to the latter's policy of "apartheid", in case of an emergency Australia views the availability of naval and air bases at Simonstown and Durban as assets.[20] South Africa does not, in any case, pose any threat to Australian interests.

As a byproduct of commonwealth connection, Australia has always enjoyed close and friendly relations with Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka. She also enjoys excellent relationship with Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Of late, Australia has made very serious efforts to display solidarity and commonality of interests with Southeast Asia and Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). She accords a high priority to her relations with Indonesia which is her immediate neighbour. Australia has in fact de-emphasised her relations both with Great Britain and the United States in order to seek better relations with the nations of the Southeast Asian region. Regional cooperation is the keynote of Australian policy of the past decade. Under Five Power Pact of 1971, Australia is committed to collaboration with Britain for defence of Malaysia and Singapore. Australia has also supported all ASEAN programmes and assisted countries of Southeast Asian region, including Indonesia economically.

Australia maintains normal relations with the Soviet Union and even though these relations have come under stress at different times, Canberra was disinclined to regard Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean as representing a direct threat to Australia's security or lines of communications. Australia does not consider that her trade, which to a very large extent passes through the Indian Ocean, will be threatened by the Soviets. She is also aware that, alone, she is incapable of influencing the Soviet actions in the Indian Ocean.

Australia, therefore, would like to encourage a Western reaction to ensure that the Indian Ocean does not become a Soviet preserve and that the western interests should remain positive and secure without antagonising the non-aligned countries in the area. Militarily, Australia has offered the cooperation of her maritime forces in surveillance. She has made available to the United States and Great Britain a naval support facility

at Cockburn Sound and the airfields at Pearce and Learmouth. Cockburn Sound has, in fact, been vastly improved and can support a task force.

Politically, Australia wishes to play an overall role in the Indian Ocean region to foster better understanding and reducing tensions and conflicts among the regional states.[21]

Indonesia

Indonesia is composed of 13,500 islands stretching 3,000 miles from East to West. Thus, her maritime interests are paramount. The Indonesians were seafaring people before the dawn of history, but it is one thing to be able to sail and navigate through the seas and quite another to be able to exercise control. Indonesia's location is strategic, since it effectively controls the Strait of Malacca, which happens to be a choke point through which over 90 percent of the shipping in the region passes. Sukarno did create a viable navy by acquiring 2 cruisers, 7 destroyers, 10 submarines and certain other crafts from Moscow, but most of them are non-operational today due to lack of spare parts.[22]

Indonesia today is a non-aligned, neutral country. She does, however, have a pro-western leaning. She has good relations with her immediate neighbours, the United States and Japan. The Netherlands her former colonial master and West Germany also enjoy good relationship and are doing excellent business.[23]

Indonesia is, perhaps the most fervent promoter of ASEAN and is the only country which has introduced politics into the counsels of this organisation. She has strongly opposed Indian and Australian entry into the organisation. The fact that she welcomes the entry of Sri Lanka and Burma into the ASEAN, should these countries so decide, is indicative of the fact that Indonesia does not want to face compilation within an "extended" ASEAN.[24]

Jakarta is apprehensive that a Soviet buildup in the Indian Ocean region will provoke a similar response from the United States. She, therefore, is in favour of removal of the Soviet and U.S. presence from the Indian Ocean. It was in this vein that President Suharto had deplored the buildup in Diego Garcia. Indonesia favours the making of the Indian Ocean into a peace zone and has always voted in favour of such a move.

The Indonesian government views India as a rival and has opposed India's entry into ASEAN. Indonesia's attitude toward India can be rationalised due to her Islamic sympathies with Pakistan and her perception that India wishes to create a region of influence in cooperation with the Soviets.

Pakistan

Pakistan is located in an area that is strategically important since shipping from the Strait of Hormuz passes within 200 miles of her shores. Her relations with immediate neighbours have a profound effect on her interests and actions. Religious hatred between Muslims and Hindus was inherited by Pakistan on her birth, since the nation was founded by division of British India on religious grounds.[25] Since then India and Pakistan have gone to war three times and have followed diagrammatically opposite routes in the international politics. An average Pakistani is convinced that India wants to destroy or dominate Pakistan.[26] A string of military rules has consistently kept the "hate India" campaigne alive to wean away the population from their demands for a democratic government. This aspect is being highlighted since it has always affected Pakistan policies and postures internationally. "What displeases India, pleases Pakistan."[27]

The Indian Ocean region is obviously important to Pakistan since she is a littoral state. Her strategic location viz-a-viz American

interests in the area gives her an added advantage. Pakistan can in effect, drive a harder bargain for any facilities or bases that she might grant. Rejection of the United States offer of a $400 million Military/Economic aid package soon after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as "peanuts" can be explained away because of the above. The Soviet move into Afghanistan has also added to Pakistan's strategic importance. The United States considers Pakistan as a "front line state" and sees it prudent to arm and strengthen her against a possible Soviet advance. Two factors, however, have acted as a block in the United States way to rush out and arm Pakistan. One is the U.S. experience in Iran where her support to the Shah, who headed an unpopular regime, boomeranged therefore increasing U.S. concern for avoiding a repeat performance in Pakistan; and the second is the effect on Indo-U.S. relations. It seems that the Reagan Administration have decided to go ahead and provide military aid to Pakistan. A $2.5 billion aid packet has been offered which the Pakistan authorities are deliberating upon and are most likely to accept.

Now let us examine the specific Pakistan interests in the region. The bulk of Pakistan's foreign trade moves by sea. She imports 85 percent of her oil from the Persian Gulf countries. Some vital imports other than oil are ferrous and non-ferrous metals and machinery of all kinds. Pakistan exports cotton, hides and skins, rice and a few other materials.[28]

Pakistan has very good relations with Saudi Arabia and most other Arab countries of the Gulf region. She receives considerable financial assistance from these countries and in turn helps to man and train their armed forces.

Pakistan has had very close and stable relations with Iran.[29] In both the 1965 and 1971 conflicts with India, Pakistan was provided military hardware by Iran. The Shah of Iran openly sided with Pakistan. The effect

of the ouster of the Shah on Pakistan-Iran relations is not too clear. The past relationship had strong overtones. It can, therefore, be assumed that Pakistan and Iran will continue to enjoy good relations. It is unlikely, however, that Iran will be able to render any help in the sphere of military equipment since she has lost her primary source of supplies - the United States.

Pakistan's friendship with China rests on mutuality of interests against India and the Soviet Union.[30] It has been steadfast and can be expected to continue for strategic and political reasons, if nothing else.

Pakistan has strengthened her armed forces and seems to be indulging in an arms race with India. She has more than made up the losses of the 1971 war, replaced obsolete equipment and filled gaps in her military capability revealed in 1971. Her defence budget has doubled since 1971.[31]

Pakistan voted for the Zone of Peace concept in December 1971 in the United Nations, but with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, she is more likely to favour a strong U.S. presence in the Indian Ocean. It is not unlikely that in the face of closer cooperation with the United States she may drop her support of the Zone of Peace concept and accept and assist the presence of the United States and her allies in the Indian Ocean.

India

> History has shown that whatever power controls the Indian Ocean, has in the first instance India's seaborne trade at its mercy and in the second, India's very independence itself.
>
> Admiral S.N. Kohli[32]

No nation in the world geographically dominates an oceanic area the way India dominates the Indian Ocean. India is the only nation having access both to the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. With excellent harbours on her Western and Eastern coasts, including the island territory

of Nicobar and Andaman, India could, if she had the requisite maritime power, exert a great influence on shipping through the Indian Ocean. But given the present strength of the Indian Navy, this potential advantage becomes a major problem.

India is a land with 683 million people to feed. This population is growing at a staggering rate of 2 percent every year. Even today, India imports several commodities for her survival. This dependence on foreign imports will increase consistently with the increase in Indian population. As of today, India imports over 65 percent of her crude oil requirements, most of which comes from the Persian Gulf region and passing within striking distance of the Pakistani navy. Indian imports today amount to millions of tons involving hundreds of vessels and millions of tons of cargo.[33] There is no way in the foreseeable future that India can rid itself of dependence on the sea for her imports.

To sustain heavy imports, India must match them with exports. Other than keeping the balance of trade figures at acceptable levels, this would give the Indian industrial output the impetus any industrial endeavour needs to sustain itself. This, too, implies an increasingly heavy reliance on shipping - a requirement which will be as perpetual as it is profitable.

In 1947, at the time when India attained freedom, her merchant shipping tonnage stood at a very modest 0.19 million Gross Registered Tons. It stands close to 8 million Gross Registered Tons today and even this carries a mere 25 percent of India's foreign trade. India is, therefore, going to continue to build and buy more ships to add to her merchant fleet. The safety of her merchant fleet will thus be a major objective for India. Since these vessels must tranverse the Indian Ocean, this region is of utmost importance to India.

India is investing a great amount of money in her efforts to drill oil off shore. The success at "Bombay High" has encouraged India to spend a lot more money on this venture. India would like to ensure the safety of her off shore drilling rigs and installations.

For a nation having the second largest population in the world and already suffering from high pressure on the land, the sea offers a very attractive alternative source both for food and minerals. It is with this in view that India has, as have most nations of the world, accepted the right of a littoral state for economic exploitation of the Exclusive Economic Zone. It is in India's interest that she exploit this zone for resources and, in times to come, this may well constitute a very reliable source to sustain India's millions.

India is one of the largest of Indian Ocean littorals. She does, in the absence of the super powers, enjoy a fair capability to safeguard her interests in the area. The presence of the super powers, however, brings a totally new and different power equation to bear upon the area. India would thus want an Indian Ocean free of super power presence and rivalry. With the current situation, when both the super powers are not only present in the region but trying their best to improve upon their staying power, this dream of India seems to have been lost forever.

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CHAPTER IV

THE INDIAN OCEAN - AN ANALYSIS

AND

INDIA'S ROLE

This chapter will begin with an attempt to analyse the current situation in the Indian Ocean and conclude with recommendations for an "Indian Role" in the region.

Analysis

> Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia. This ocean is the key to the Seven Seas. In the twenty first century the destiny of the world will be decided in its waters.
>
> Admiral Mahan[1]

So apocalyptic a prediction from such a source would appear to refer to an area permanently prominent in the world. Yet the truth is that the Indian Ocean has attracted world attention only during the current decade, after a century and half of tranquil obscurity under British domination. For over a century, British colonies formed the littoral, British ships were the main traffic and the Royal Navy, unchallenged, ensured the security of the Indian Ocean both in peace and the two world wars. The closure of Suez during the Arab Israeli War of 1967, followed in 1968 by the British announcement of an intention to scrap commitments East of Suez, made it clear to the world that Pan Britannica had finally ended and that a whole ocean lay open to would be successors.

The British rule had left a heritage of military training in most of her former territories, thus providing a nucleus for their defence or expansion. However, little or no naval training had ever been imparted. Hence, even as large a successor state as India lacked maritime power to make a bid for Britain's former role. Newly prosperous Iran did make a bid for control over a restricted area, i.e., the Persian Gulf but today lacks credibility. The littorals, however, have a definite role to play. Should any power seek domination over the littorals or the Indian Ocean, their reaction is likely to be hostile. Attempts to influence them by liberal economic aid and prestigious military hardware are widely tolerated, but it is highly improbable that any of these recipients would permit the establishment of a new imperialism, if they could resist it. In the present climate of international politics such resistence is almost certainly assured of success.

However, with the British withdrawal from the Indian Ocean came a void. Vacuums in the political sphere possess the same properties of their counterparts in the physical world. As such, it was unlikely from the record of similar situations in times past that the Indian Ocean could escape the attention of the major powers in attempting to achieve at least limited objectives serving their national interests in the void left by the British. Indeed, quite minor appearances[2] of Soviet and U.S. naval units since 1968 have been heralded as portents of escalations and conflicts to come.

Russia has traditionally been a landlocked power with historic yearnings for access to warm waters. The lessons of the Spanish Civil War and later of the Greek uprising of 1948, when Stalin lamented the lack of a navy to facilitate effective intervention, were bitter medicine indeed. The Soviets were unable to intervene in the Suez crisis of 1956

and the Lebanese war of 1958 and were finally humiliated during the Cuban crisis of 1962, when it was quite clear that the American naval blockade could not be broken due to lack of naval power. However, impelled by an acute sense of naval deficiency and pushed by their forceful Admiral of the Fleet Garshokov, the Soviets embarked on a naval construction programme. By 1969 Garshokov was able to claim that the Soviet navy was a full-fledged ocean-going striking force.[3] Thereafter, into the void left by the British in the Indian Ocean sailed the Soviet Navy. The Soviet presence has since 1968 increased. The Soviets have worked for and acquired facilities and bases all along the Indian Ocean which not only enable them to support naval presence in the region but allows them to have a surveillance network employing electronically equipped surface craft and submarines supported by land-based aircraft to track movements of all American craft and those of their allies in transit in the Indian Ocean. This greatly increases the Soviet capacity for successful interdiction of vital mineral supplies from South Africa, and oil from the Gulf, enroute to the West and to Japan.

By comparison, the U.S. has long concentrated on a powerful ocean-going navy and a far-flung pattern of both surface and submarine patrols. In the case of submarines, the ever increasing range and destructiveness of the vessels and their missiles now places them in the forefront of the U.S. second strike force in case of a nuclear war and their presence in the Indian Ocean would pose a grave threat to industrial and military targets in Southern Russia, though this area is equally targetable from the Eastern Mediterranean. However, as in the case of the Soviets, increasing economic costs place constraints on the construction and deployment at great distances of both surface vessels and submarines. A few years ago, it seemed that the basic need of U.S. strategy in the area would be

adequately met by a network of communications facilities, of which the key would be the base at Diego Garcia, linking its counterparts at North-West Cape in Australia and elsewhere. This would enable submarines to cruise the ocean with ease and target their missiles with accuracy.

The importance then of the Indian Ocean to the United States and the Soviet Union appears to arise mainly out of its potential as a skirmish area, possessing the attractive quality of providing margins for disengagement without risking serious loss of face before dangerous escalation occurs. Neither power, however, can afford to leave the area to the other on the grounds that little is to be lost by doing so since it is afterall strategically a sort of universal flank. Further, each has interests beyond solely strategic ones, and these are both economic and political in nature. The United States, for example, has considerable investments in the oil producing states of the Middle East,[4] even though its own fuel needs, though increasing, could conceivably be met from its own resources supplemented by resources nearer home. More important by far is the U.S. stake in preventing the interdiction of oil supplies to her allies who depend heavily on the Middle East oil. Japan is probably capable under extreme pressure of using naval elements of her Self Defence Forces to take part in a protective exercise as are also Britain, France and, to a limited extent Australia. Nevertheless, each of these states would far rather see the United States accepting the responsibility for the protection of this industrial lifeline. The same argument applies to the protection of mercantile traffic of these states using Indian Ocean sea lanes.

Soviet stakes are rather different, though quite as important. Ever since her commitment to the Aswan Dam project, the Soviet Union has sunk ever increasing sums of money and material into bolstering regimes on the East coast of Africa. So far, results have been marginal, but the

additional incentive of Chinese ideological rivalry and consequent competition for the attachment of African and Middle East states has left the Soviets a narrower margin than is available to the United States. Additionally, Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean renders it possible not only to support regimes in Africa which are opposed to states under Chinese influence - Tanzania, Zaire and Pakistan - but also India and Bangladesh for the same reasons. This is a political goal which the Soviets cannot afford to forego lightly.

The attitudes of the small and medium powers bordering the Indian Ocean must also be taken into account. Of these, Australia, South Africa and possibly Pakistan seem gravely concerned about the Soviet naval presence and are clearly anxious to see the United States countervailing force in place. Hence, the enlargement of facilities at Cockburn Sound, Learmouth and Simonstown are regarded as sound investments in defence of concerned states, if for no other reason than that they are inducements to the United States to remain in the area. On the other hand, following the lead of India, almost all other states seem anxious to avoid being caught up in what seems to them an extension of super power rivalry and its attendant risk of conflict to an unacceptable level. Their solution, which finds expression both in the Lusaka Declaration of September 1970[5] and in a U.N. resolution of 16 December 1974[6], calls for the neutralisation of the Indian Ocean by declaring it both a zone of peace and a nuclear free zone.

It is in light of the foregoing that India's role in the Indian Ocean is being discussed.

INDIA'S ROLE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION

General

The rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union demands the recognition of India's role in the Indian Ocean. This is more so since

the other littorals, due to their geographical environment. population and economic poverty, are unlikely to emerge as regional powers. South Africa is yet to face a political challenge at home and the East African countries, together with Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand and Malaysia, are too small and industrially weak to influence the region significantly. While the Arab countries with their petro dollars have the ability to develop, political uncertainity and lack of effective leadership are inimical to such growth. Iran, during the Shah's regime, did come close to being the gendarme of the Gulf, but the recent developments have greatly undermined Iran's military potential and even her future is clouded with political uncertainity.

Pakistan and Indonesia, however, could be viable regional powers and their geographical location demands such a course of action. However, while the shadow of the Afghanistan crisis as well as political instability, is keeping the situation fluid in Pakistan, Indonesia is yet to recover from the economic and industrial set back that she had suffered in yesteryears. This leaves India - a subcontinent centrally located - to take the lead to diffuse the tension in the region.

It must be borne in mind that to influence the region, India must attain a stature of esteem in the eyes of the littorals. The smaller states should trust and rally around India to negate any attempt by the super powers to disturb the peace of the area. Before making a realistic assessment of India's image in the region, it is necessary to discuss India's foreign policy and her professed adherence to the concept of non-alignment.

India's Foreign Policy

Ever since India's independence, her foreign policy has revolved around the policy of non-alignment. It has been the purpose of India's foreign policy to promote harmony, trust and a cooperative spirit among

nations since such a relationship would strengthen peace, eliminate tension and reduce the danger of conflict. The object of India's foreign policy is not to attain strategic advantages or to extract concessions from a weaker neighbour. The Farrakka Agreement with Bangladesh and demarcation of maritime boundaries with Sri Lanka are illustrative of such a policy. India, in the recent past has also adhered to her professed policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of her neighbours. In seeking cooperation from and offering it to her neighbours, India has, of late, shed her patronising attitude. All these developments in the sphere of foreign policy have succeeded in projecting India in a better light.

India has also developed fresh links with ASEAN. She has adopted a pragmatic posture on the Afghanistan issue and has been approached by many countries to play a significant role in arriving at a amicable solution. In a nutshell, the policy of non-alignment has at last gained the appreciation of the world and India today stands on the threshold of playing an important role in world affairs.

India's Image

India enjoys the reputation of being the largest and most stable democracy in Asia.[7] The results of the last two elections have displayed to the world, the political maturity of the Indian people. India's stand on many international issues, as well as her refusal to sign the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty in the face of severe criticism by the super powers, have demonstrated the genuineness of the policy of non-alignment and her independence of will to the world. After 34 years of planning, she has built for herself a sound industrial infrastructure and technical expertise to shake off the total dependence on foreign powers.

India's image today is that of a dominant power in the region and an emerging 'middle power' in the world.[8] It is obvious that no other country of the region is placed more favourably than India to play a leading role in the area. But India, while playing this role, will have to adopt some very concrete diplomatic and political measures so as not to raise doubts about her intentions and objectives.

Political and Diplomatic Measures

The most important international force which India can capitalise upon at present is the non-aligned movement. A majority of littorals are content to follow the policy of non-alignment and are active participants in the movement. They have a common stake in promoting disarmament and global economic development. They are also keen to stay clear of the super power struggle and competition. India should take note of these facts and pursue a foreign policy that will support the following measures in the near future:

1. India should endeavour to establish an Indian Ocean Common Market with countries of the region. Most countries of the region are poor, yet there are many natural resources and agricultural and industrial products upon which to base this market. Bonds of common interests will bind the countries together fostering better understanding and mutual confidence.

2. India should vigorously pursue goals of anti-imperialism and racism. India, as the first state to have raised the question of racism at the United Nations, should take greater initiative than it has in recent years. Vigorous opposition to racism by India would also act as a cementing force among India and the littorals of East Africa.

3. India should continue to demand the conversion of the Indian Ocean into a nuclear free zone and a zone of peace through the non-aligned movement at the United Nations and other international forums.

4. India should take a lead in forming the Indian Ocean Community for greater regional cooperation. Such an organisation will be able to solve most regional problems and smaller nations will not have to look for patronage outside the region in order to safeguard their interests. This will foster regional cooperation, understanding and faith which will help keep the superpowers out of the region.

5. India should, within capability, transfer aid and technology to countries of the region. India's aid has been, for too long, an ignored aspect of India's foreign policy but its impact could cause early manifestation of India's growing status in the region.

Military Options

Militarily, India is superior to all the states of the region. This superiority is bound to continue in the foreseeable future. It must, however, be understood that no amount of development can raise India to a level of military parity with either of the super powers. On the other hand, there is very little possibility that any of the super powers will get directly involved in any local confrontation in the region. There is still a possibility that either of the super powers might use gunboat diplomacy as was seen during the Indo-Pak War in 1971. The flexing of muscle needs to be countered by an effective deterrence. Any regional deterrence will largely depend on India's maritime strength.[9] Currently, the Indian Navy though equipped with modern ships is woefully short of what may be expected of it. India needs to develop her maritime forces and any development must include the following aspects:

1. Development of the Andaman's and Nicobar Islands for support of ocean-going vessels.

2. Expanding of naval air aim to augment maritime reconnaissance capability.

3. Modernisation of surface forces.

4. Development of logistic support facilities to facilitate longer periods at sea.

5. A proportionate increase in naval personnel and ship strength.

These are, however, most optimistic proposals and are not related to India's financial resources. It is obvious that with an expenditure of only 4 percent of her Grand National Product on defence, these are unlikely to materialise. There is, therefore, the need to re-evaluate priorities and make a realistic assessment of India's needs.

The ultimate solution for creating an effective deterrence lies in building an Indian Ocean Maritime Force drawn out of the navies of the littorals. This force can be effectively used for policing the area and keeping a watch on the movement of foreign navies. India will have to make a substantial contribution to such a force and this will necessitate faster growth of Indian Navy. Creation of such a force would infuse a sense of comaraderie and togetherness amongst the littorals. This is, of course, a most ambitious proposal and can be achieved only if the littorals of the region unite in their determination to keep the area free of super power rivalry.

Nuclear Options

Though India has acquired the know how for developing a nuclear weapon, her declared policy is not to develop and deploy nuclear weapons. The mounting opposition by the super powers and certain other western and neighbouring countries, as well as lack of resources, are additional factors

which have perhaps, kept India from going nuclear. Pakistan, however, is on the threshold of acquiring a nuclear capability and when that happens no government in India will be able to resist the public pressure for going nuclear. It is, therefore, an option which largely depends on Pakistan.

However, the effect of India going nuclear on other Indian Ocean littorals cannot be accurately predicted. It is possible that as a result of possessing nuclear capability, India's stock may go up making it easier for her to participate in building a regional order. It could, at the same time create a doubt about India's intentions. It is true that thus far India has not displayed any expansionist designs towards her neighbours but it is likely that smaller states around India may misread Indian intentions, particularly when instigated by Pakistan, China and even the super powers. India's emergence as a nuclear power could send the neighbours looking for a nuclear umbrella from either of the super powers and that would lead to an upsetting of stability in the region and thus be counterproductive.

Under the circumstances, it appears that having demonstrated a weapons producing capability and yet staying non-nuclear and a non-signatory of the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty, India is keeping her options open and may be able to get the best of both worlds - the ability as a non weapon state to promote disarmament and chastise the nuclear powers and the ability to wield a latent deterrent.

The fears expressed by the littorals in the early 70's, that super power rivalry will exacerbate local conflicts have come true. Recent development in the Indian Ocean suggest that the "Peace Zone" concept is obsolete. There is no doubt a new approach is needed to tackle the issue since the super power rivalry is likely to increase in the near future and that is positively disadvantageous for small, developing littorals. The solution, one feels, lies in regional cooperation encompassing all the facets ranging from trade to a military alliance, based on good neighbourliness and mutual faith and trust. For any such solution, India must play the role of a torchbearer.

END NOTES

[1]Burrell and Cotterell, Indian Ocean, p. 220.

[2]Vali, The Indian Ocean, p. 190.

[3]Pravada, 12 August 69.

[4]Thompson, Strategy in Pacific and Indian Oceans, p. 24.

[5]Singh, Rajendra K. Politics of Indian Ocean (Thompson Press (India) Publications Division, 1976), p. 57.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Cohen, Stephen P., and Park, Richard L., India: Emergent Power? (New York: Crane, Russak and Company, 1978), p. 49.

[8]Ibid., p. 74.

[9]Kohli, Sea Power, p. 116.

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